

However, these entertainments did not necessarily defuse social tensions. In 59 AD during the gladiatorial games at Pompeii a riot broke out between the locals and visitors from nearby Nuceria. The amphitheatre was closed for ten years. Sadly, the modern world can offer parallels to such pointless brutality: in 1986 thirty-eight were killed and over four hundred wounded when conflict broke out between football fans in the Heysel soccer stadium in Belgium.

Theatre

In Rome during the first century BC the shows would generally begin with performances in the theatre, continue with gladiatorial displays and end with the races. The drama consisted largely of comedies, slapstick, knockabout farce, acrobatics, ballet and mime, an increasingly popular Roman mix of satire and playful antics. Biting references to leading politicians were speedily picked up by the audience. Serious drama was not unknown but it tended to be swamped in spectacle in a bid for popular appeal by the sponsor. Accius' *Clytemnestra* was staged with 600 mules. And Horace tells us that when spectators became bored there were cries of 'We want bears' and 'We want boxers'.

Gladiators

Until Rome's first permanent amphitheatre was built in 29 BC, exhibitions of gladiators and of wild beast fights took place in temporary enclosures in the forum and the Circus Maximus. Pompey exhibited elephants in the latter at his games in 55 BC and when they stampeded and made for the railings enclosing the arena, there was general panic. Julius Caesar's response in 46 BC was to surround the arena with a ditch ten feet wide and ten feet deep.



Gladiators

The gladiators riding purple robes. supplied the m

Who were situations in the death. The pro hope. If they s or they might b performance. A especially amo were criminals slaves, often pr some were free forced to do so swore: 'I undert beaten, to die by an activity whic to the finish we

In the arena differently equip The heavy-armed or spear. His head by a greave and also wore a helmet reversed sickle. wore a tunic and dagger, and a net

If a gladiator express passionat off. Thumbs down his weapon and s probably meant k always fall in with crown and prize Mercury, the god with a hot iron to covered the pools

Brutality did not the arena, only on against each other which huge number AD when the emperor amphitheatre, the single day.) Incense the animals, and slaughter audience as they saw entire circle of the